

REMARKS

The examiner rejected all claims consisting of 1-4, 9-12, 14, 15, and 17, as indefinite based upon the use of the phrases "pump means" and "valve means." These phrases have been eliminated and it is believed that this amendment eliminates any indefiniteness.

The present claims were rejected as obvious over Jeager in view of Bertholon. All claims have been amended in ways that are believed to avoid this rejection. More specifically, Claim 1 has been amended to require that the inflatable bladders have a circular cross-sectional shape and also that the pair of elongated inflatable tubular bladders are separated by a gap space containing no bladder, which gap space overlies a vertical central axis of the front panel. Figure 3 of Jeager does not teach bladders having a circular cross-section and, instead, as shown for instance in Figure 5, shows bladders with an oblong shape where the depth of the bladder is about one-fifth of the width. Also, as amended, the bladders are called to be separated by a gap space which overlies a vertical central axis of the front panel. These two amendments are important in the operation of applicant's back support apparatus. As stated in the specification at page 12, lines 5-8, the bladders are spaced to exert a support force against the users spinal column from opposite sides of the spinal column. Figure 3 of the Jeager patent teaches away from this concept completely, since it contains a support member directly over the central axis of the front panel. Although Figure 4 of Jeager shows an open central portion, it does not teach circular bladders, and instead teaches very non-circular and oblong shaped bladders. The examiner has cited the Bertholon patent as showing a pump and a valve, but Bertholon does not make up for the

deficiencies of the Jeager patent as it relates to the shape and position of the bladders. It is believed clear that Claims 1-4 are allowable over the references of record.

Claims 9-12, 14, 15, and 17 have been amended to call for a gap space between the bladders which overlie a vertical central axis of the front panel. Also, claim 9 has been amended to call for an upper bridge conduit positioned to conduct air between the bladders and located above the vertical mid-point of the bladders and a lower bridge conduit positioned below the vertical mid-point of the bladders. Such a construction is shown in Figure 1 of applicant's drawings and is not suggested by either the Jeager or Bertholon patents.

Referring to claims 4 and 10-12, the examiner states that Jeager shows bladders spaced at most two inches from each other referring to Figure 3 of Jeager's drawings. Clearly, the outer bladders referred to by the examiner (see the second to last line of page 2 of the Office Action) appear to be spaced at least 8 inches apart. Claim 4 calls for the bladders to have an inflated diameter of two inches and the word "diameter" is defined as follows:

"The length of a straight line passing through the center of a circle and connecting two points on the circumference."

In viewing Figure 5 of Jeager's drawings, clearly, there is no circle.

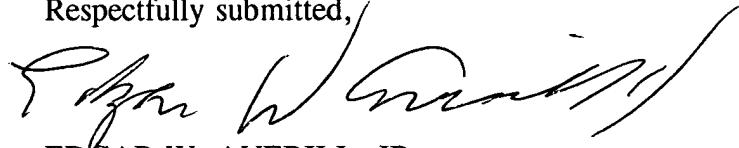
Claim 14 has been cancelled and claim 15 calls for the upper and lower bridge conduits to have an inflated diameter less than an inflated diameter of each tubular bladder. Jeager, as shown in Figure 3, has an inflated portion at the bottom of the three bladders, which is clearly larger than the vertical support members. None of Jeager's drawings show a

pair of bridge conduits, as called for by applicant's claim 15. They also do not show bridge conduits having an inflated diameter less than the inflated diameter of the tubular bladders.

Claim 17, being dependent upon claim 9, is believed allowable for that reason.

It is believed that the present claims as amended are not suggested by the references of record and allowance of all such claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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